



INSIDE WAAPA

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SINGING WITH ELLIE



Photo by A R Thomas

MELISSA ERPEN SCORES THE GIG OF A LIFETIME

At the end of October, vocalist Melissa Erpen and her partner, English keyboard player Christian Gulino, gave a masterclass at WAAPA for the Contemporary Music students.

Melissa, a 2006 graduate, spoke to the current students about how she has gone from WAAPA student to singing backup and touring the world with English singer/songwriter Ellie Goulding's band. Christian, also a sessional musician, is currently working with Kylie Minogue.

As part of the 2015/2016 Ellie Goulding World Tour, Melissa has travelled throughout Europe, the UK, North America, New Zealand and Australia. With the tour finishing in Melbourne in early October, Melissa took to opportunity to fly to Perth to catch up with family and friends before heading back to London.

"Working with Ellie has been an amazing experience, playing in all these huge arenas in front of incredible crowds around the world," says Melissa.

Melissa has performed on many of the world's greatest stages, including Madison Square Gardens in New York, which she describes as "a major bucket list moment".

Other highlights of her year on the road include performing in Verona, Italy at the 2015 Intimissimi on Ice – a spectacular live show that combines ice skating and pop music in the Arena di Verona, a Roman amphitheatre – and performing in Melbourne at last year's AFL Grand Final.

Perth-born Melissa moved to London in 2012 to further her music career. However after a year she felt increasingly unhappy with the direction her music was taking and experienced 'a dip in morale' so she took a few months off performing.

"But obviously with music, it always comes back to you, so I got in contact with a few different agents," she says. Out of this came an invitation to submit her demo tape to Ellie Goulding's management for a gig as the star's new backup singer.

"I didn't really think anything of it at the time because I guess it kind of felt so out of reach, it just felt so far away. I was excited but I didn't get my hopes up," Melissa says. A few days later she got the call saying she had the gig.

Melissa was sent all the songs for her first show with the band. "So I learnt everything to the best of my ability, then I had four days of rehearsals with the other backup singer and we just worked through all our harmonies," she says. "It was very intense, a lot of pressure but I just jumped into it."

That first show with Ellie Goulding was in London's Hyde Park in front of over 100,000 people.

"If someone had told me that I'd be singing with Ellie Goulding, I would've just laughed because I would've thought that was a bit far fetched!" says Melissa.

After her Perth sojourn, Melissa returned to London to perform with the Ellie Goulding band at the Royal Albert Hall, followed by trips to America and India for Christmas and New Year gigs.

Melissa credits her time at WAAPA as giving her the opportunity to hone her live band experience. "I would definitely say WAAPA helped me in a huge way – it's a hub for talent and creativeness.

"When I first started at WAAPA I didn't have much live band experience because I came straight out of school," she explains. "WAAPA really gives you so many opportunities to perform and working with the lecturers, who were so amazingly talented and experienced in their field, gave me the tools to work with live bands and feel confident in that setting."

Above: Melissa Erpen (centre) with fellow backing vocalists on tour with Ellie Goulding.

ANTHEM HONOUR

For the first time ever, international Rugby League came to Perth in October.

The Australian Kangaroos took on the number one world-ranked New Zealand Kiwis in an end-of-season Test Match on October 15 at NIB Stadium.

Sophie Foster, who graduated from WAAPA's Contemporary Music program this year, was chosen to sing the national anthem at the event.

Sophie describes the experience as the highlight in her singing career.

"I didn't realise how monumental it was until I knew it was not only broadcast nationally but internationally as well," she says.

"With 20,000 people in the stands it felt surreal and the adrenalin was pumping. The roar of the crowd afterwards was exhilarating and I had an overwhelming feeling as I stepped off the podium. I am so thankful for the experience and I was proud to call myself an Australian."

Photo courtesy of NRL





IN THE SPOTLIGHT

IT'S BEEN A BUSY YEAR FOR WAAPA LIGHTING DESIGNER TRENT SUIDGEEST

In the six years since he graduated from WAAPA, Trent Suidgeest has established himself as one of Australia's most sought-after young lighting designers.

This year alone he has worked on six theatre productions, moving up and down the east coast from his base in Sydney as he travels from show to show.

Trent started the year working on the Sydney Festival and Brisbane seasons of the critically acclaimed opera *The Rabbits*, produced by Opera Australia and Perth's Barking Gecko Theatre Company. First performed as part of the 2015 Perth International Arts Festival, *The Rabbits* won four Helpmann Awards, including Best New Australian Work, Best Original Score, Best Costume Design, and Best Production for Children.

In April, Trent was lighting designer on the Sydney Theatre Company's production of *Hay Fever*, directed by Imara Savage, and two months later, he

lit Opera Australia's new production of *Carmen*, directed by John Bell. This was followed by *The Beast* for Ambassador Theatre Group, directed by Simon Phillips, which opened in August.

In October he was back with Opera Australia, lighting a new production of Alan John and Dennis Watkins' *The Eighth Wonder*, rechristened *Sydney Opera House - The Opera*. The show's lighting console was programmed by 2007 WAAPA lighting graduates Peter Rubie and Blake Garner.

Set on the steps of the Sydney Opera House, the show was billed as 'the world's first large-scale, live silent opera'. The orchestra was inside the Opera House while the cast, performing outside on the Monumental Steps, was miked up, watching the conductor and stage director on large screens behind the audience. Each of the 3,000 strong audience sitting on the forecourt gazing up the famous

white sails had wireless Audio Technica headphones on, marrying the music and voices in a brilliant technical feat.

Clive Paget in *Limelight Magazine* wrote: "Here, the design and direction fully match the aspiration of the venture ... Trent Suidgeest's colossally conceived lighting design picks it all out to perfection, the intensity of each scene reverberating against the sandy stone and night sky. Visually, it's hugely appealing and immensely watchable."

Most recently, Trent was in Melbourne to design the lighting for *Dusty: The Musical* for the Production Company, which opened on November 12. The show, directed by Jason Langley, stars Amy Lehpamer in the lead role and features WAAPA graduates Virginia Gay (2006 Acting) and Baylie Carson (2015 Music Theatre).





FACADE FACELIFT

WAAPA COMMISSIONS GRADUATE TO REIMAGINE THE FAÇADE OF ITS NEW SPIEGELTENT

In August, ECU became the first university in the world to acquire a Spiegeltent, providing a unique performance space for WAAPA students to hone their craft.

Spiegel tents – made of hand-carved wood and canvas, lavishly decorated with mirrors and stained glass, and detailed in velvet and brocade – have been used as travelling dance halls, bars and entertainment salons since the early 20th century.

WAAPA's spiegel tent, dubbed The Edith, is currently undergoing a facelift to make the exterior reflect the theatrical treats that will be on offer inside the tent for future audiences.

Perth aerosol artist and muralist, Jerome Davenport, has been commissioned to reimagine the tent's façade, a project that will take up to a month to complete.

Jerome, who graduated from WAAPA's Props and Scenery program in 2013, plans to follow a 'classical Spiegel tent theme' with his painting and imagery, incorporating elements of the acts to be performed in the tent in his composition.

His artwork, which combines street art and portraiture, is characterised by a distinctive photo-realism.

The 26-year-old artist, who got his first commission in 2010, has since received commissions from local councils throughout WA to beautify their public buildings, including schools, gyms and aquatic centres.

He has also received numerous private commissions, including a 3m tall and 2.5m wide portrait of US rapper, ASAP Rocky, painted inside Eagles ruckman Nic Naitanui's home. Last year, Jerome entered a portrait of Naitanui's face in Australia's most prestigious portraiture award, the Archibald Prize.

In addition to holding exhibitions of his own work, Jerome runs Up on Hay Studio, a multi-use exhibition space/gallery promoting and supporting established and local emerging artists. He is also the founder of Blank Walls, an arts collective championing street art, design, installations and sculpture.

Jerome has recently returned from a trip to South America, where he completed commissions for the Motivarte photography school in Buenos Aires and painted two works in two days for the Hyper Festival in Lima, Peru.

Jerome believes his artwork has benefited enormously from his training at WAAPA.

"Throughout my three years at WAAPA I've learnt numerous techniques that have helped in my professional life as a freelance visual artist," he says.

"I specialise in murals, so skills such as mapping large scale theatre backdrops, proportional drawing, sculpture and scenic finishes, have all helped me practically but have also aided my development as an artist."

SPINNING OUT

Since graduating from WAAPA in 2012, Travis Jeffery has landed a string of plum acting roles, including in Angelina Jolie's critically acclaimed film *Unbroken* and the latest instalment of the *Pirates of the Caribbean* franchise alongside Johnny Depp.

"I've just been incredibly lucky," says Travis. "I kind of have to stop every now and then and go 'wow'. I've had such a lucky run."

Most recently, Travis starred in the Australian romantic comedy film *Spin Out*, co-written and co-directed by comedian Tim Ferguson.

Released in September this year, *Spin Out* centres on a group of close-knit friends from a small country town who gather for a night of partying at the annual Bachelors and Spinsters party.

The film also stars *Twilight* heart-throb Xavier Samuel, Morgan Griffin, *Winners & Losers*' Melissa Bergland, Christie Whelan and Lincoln Lewis.

Growing up on a farm in Healesville in the Yarra Valley, Jeffery could relate to his character Sparrow's country upbringing.

In the film Travis had to strip down to his underwear, wear a cow onesie and engage in a messy mud fight. "He's very naïve and has a heart of gold, so I think that's what really drew me to the role," says Travis. "Sparrow is really different from all the roles I've done before."

Travis will next be seen in *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales*, due for release in May 2017.

From left: Xavier Samuel, co-writer and director Tim Ferguson, Morgan Griffin and Travis Jeffery



Photo by Sarah Enticknap



A FIRST FOR WAAPA AT GENÉE

FOUR WAAPA DANCERS ARE INVITED TO ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST PRE-EMINENT BALLET COMPETITIONS

In December, four WAAPA dancers will travel to Sydney to compete in the Genée International Ballet competition.

Sarah Ouwendyk, Isabelle Leclézio, Evelyn Roberts and Kristin Barwick will join 90 other young dancers who have been chosen to compete in what is known simply as 'the Genée', one of the world's most prestigious ballet competitions.

This is the first time that WAAPA has been represented at the competition.

Named after Dame Adeline Genée, the first president of the Royal Academy of Dance, the competition attracts the finest young dancers trained in the RAD syllabus from around the globe.

Winners have gone on to work for some of the most world's most renowned international ballet companies such as The Royal Ballet, American Ballet Theatre and the English National Ballet.

The four dancers prepared for the competition with WAAPA Ballet Lecturer Diana de Vos OAM.

"Three international artistic directors were judging and the opportunity to participate in this huge competition can open some extraordinary doors," says Diana, who in addition to her teaching

work is currently undertaking a Master of Arts at WAAPA.

"It's also a first-class opportunity to get to work with renowned choreographers and teachers for five days before performing."

All four students have received high distinctions in Advanced 2 RAD exams. Evelyn Roberts and Kristin Barwick have also been awarded the Solo Seal, which is the final exam in the RAD syllabus.

The dancers trained six days a week in preparation for the Genée on contemporary solos choreographed by WAAPA Classical Coordinator Kim McCarthy, former WA Ballet Principal Artist Jayne Smeulders and Kristin Barwick.

"They had their WAAPA classes during the week and then on Saturday I worked with them on their Genée material," Diana de Vos says.

Evelyn Roberts says that it has been a privilege to work with Diana de Vos on the Genée program.

"She has so much knowledge and experience and is a great mentor for students going in to such a prestigious competition. She has been an outstanding tutor who has prepared us really well for the 10-day competition."

"Diana is so caring and invested in us," agrees fellow dancer Kristin Barwick. "Yet she is tough and knows how to get the very best out of us."

Kristin was thrilled to be given the opportunity to compete at the Genée. "I am grateful to have had the chance to participate in something as large as this. I got to work with some high standing and amazing people."

In 2002 the RAD took the decision to hold the competition outside London for the first time, taking it to Australia where the Sydney Opera House played host to a record number of candidates. Following that success, the Genée has now been hosted around the world. It returns to Sydney this year from 7-11 December.

Candidates received a unique opportunity to work with renowned choreographers and teachers for five days before performing at the semi-finals, and then competed for a range of medals in the final at the Sydney Opera House.

Before heading to Sydney, the four dancers performed in *The Rehearsal*, a divertissement piece that was part of the WAAPA November dance season, *Verge*.

SCREEN SUCCESS

WAAPA ALUMNI FEATURE STRONGLY IN THE CURRENT CROP OF AUSSIE TELEVISION SHOWS

A host of new Australian television series airing over the past six months has seen a number of WAAPA Acting graduates gracing the nation's small screens.

In the sixth series of the beloved Channel 10 drama *Offspring*, which aired from June to September this year, 2008 graduate TJ Power played the Proudman family's surprise half-brother Will Bowen. The 30-year-old actor has previously appeared in the 2010 film *Eat, Pray Love*, starring Julia Roberts and Javier Bardem, and in the 2012 hit Australian film, *The Sapphires*.

In September the 10-part drama series *Doctor Doctor* premiered on the Nine Network, with WAAPA graduate Hayley McElhinney in the role of Penny, the small town hospital head doctor, starring alongside Rodger Corser in the title role of heart surgeon Hugh Knight.

"It's a great role and the writing is funny and tragic, often at the same time. I was also drawn to the people involved – Claudia Karvan (who is among the producers) is someone I really admire and I thought working with her would be an incredible opportunity," Hayley said in a recent interview.

The series also features new graduate Shalom Brune-Franklin as Irish nurse, Aoife. Shalom was the inaugural recipient of the Chris Edmund Scholarship. Her credits to date include roles in the Robert Connolly's television miniseries *Barracuda* and the Ben C. Lucas feature film, *Other Life*.

Network Ten's new series, *The Wrong Girl*, which aired in September, saw 2005 graduate Ian Meadows in the leading role of Pete Barnett, best-friend-turned-love-interest of Jessica Marais's character, Lily. *The Wrong Girl* also features 2013 graduate Cecelia Peters as junior producer Alice Felton-Smith and 1993 graduate Leah Vandenberg as Meredith Vadivelu, the manager of the coffee shop where Pete works.

Ian, who has a long list of acting credits to his name in television, film and theatre, is also an award-winning

playwright, screenwriter and director. Cecelia most recently portrayed Joanne Walters in Seven Network's miniseries *Catching Milat* while Leah is best known for her role as Anne Cassidy in the comedy series *Stupid, Stupid Man* and as a long-term presenter on *Play School*.

October saw the premieres of the Seven Network's drama series, *The Secret Daughter*, the Australian homeland security drama *Hyde & Seek* on Channel Nine, and the Network Ten two-part miniseries *Brock*, all of which featured WAAPA graduates in lead roles.

2009 graduate Matt Levett starred as Jamie Norton in *The Secret Daughter*, opposite Jessica Mauboy's Billie Carter; 2010 graduate Claire Lovering took the role of Detective Tanya Martin in *Hyde & Seek*, alongside Matt Nable, Zoe Ventoura, Mandy McElhinney and Deborra-Lee Furness; and 2011 graduate Alex Williams played Australian motor racing driver John 'Slug' Harvey in *Brock*, starring Matthew Le Nevez, Brendan Cowell and Steve Bisley.

Matt, who enjoyed a regular role as Andrew Swanson in the television drama series *A Place To Call Home* and was most recently seen in the television series *Wolf Creek*, was awarded the prestigious Heath Ledger Scholarship in 2015. Matt is also an avid filmmaker; his short film *Unwanted Friend* was a finalist in the 2012 Tropfest short film festival.

On graduating from WAAPA, Claire performed in the Australian stage tour of *The Graduate*, starring Texan supermodel Jerry Hall, and in 2015 featured in the disaster film *San Andreas*, starring Dwayne Johnson and Paul Giamatti.

While in his final year at WAAPA, Alex was cast as Julian Assange in Robert Connolly's *Underground: The Julian Assange Story*. He followed that acclaimed performance with roles in *INXS: Never Tear Us Apart* and *Catching Milat*. Alex has recently finished performing in Black Swan State Theatre Company's production of *Tartuffe* by Justin Fleming.



Clockwise from top left:
TJ Power
Hayley McElhinney
Shalom Brune-Franklin
Ian Meadows
Cecelia Peters
Leah Vandenberg
Matt Levett
Claire Lovering
Alex Williams

Photos courtesy of Network Ten, Nine Network and Seven Network

FINDING INSPIRATION

PERTH'S TEDX FEATURES WAAPA STAFF

A violin virtuoso, a singer/songwriter/producer and an electronic music historian who all have connections with WAAPA were invited to be part of TEDxPerth 2016, held on Saturday 15 October at the Perth Concert Hall.

Associate Professor Alexandre Da Costa, sessional lecturer Rachel Claudio and PhD student Meg Travers were three of the 14 speakers at TEDxPerth 2016, which was billed as 'a day of inspirational, stimulating and original ideas from WA's most original thinkers and doers'.

TED, which began in 1984 as a conference where Technology, Entertainment and Design converged, is a nonpartisan nonprofit devoted to spreading ideas, usually through short, powerful talks. Today TED is a world-wide phenomenon, covering topics from science to business to global issues in more than 110 languages.

TEDxPerth 2016 featured talks on the Global Poverty Project, ground-breaking medical research on treatments for genetic diseases, advances in space exploration using radio waves, and embracing plastic-free living.

World-renowned concert violinist Alexandre Da Costa, who is WAAPA's Head of Strings, presented a talk on the role of a performer and artist in today's society. The Canadian-born musical superstar has been guest soloist for nearly two

thousand concerts and recitals around the world. He has won numerous national and international awards, and has performed in all the world's major concert halls, played with the most prestigious orchestras and worked with acclaimed conductors. As a recording artist, he has more than 20 solo CDs.

Singer/songwriter/producer Rachel Claudio, a freelance lecturer in Creativity at WAAPA, is best known for her work in real-time music production. She uses music technology to create and perform entirely orchestrated songs live and in real time, with her video interpretation of the track 'Hey Ya' surpassing 2 millions views. Rachel is also a composer/arranger/songwriter for major labels, and composer for film and TV scores.

Electronic music historian Meg Travers used her PhD research into 'ancient' electronic musical instruments such as the trautionium – the forerunner of today's synthesizers – to discuss how technology obsolescence impacts the performing arts. Travers has degrees in music technology and is a qualified radio technician, and has brought these two worlds together in building her own electronic musical instruments, as well as creating soundscapes crafted from the RF noises that are around us every day, but out of our audible range.



Photo by Elisabeth Cloutier



Photo by Ilona Tabin

From top: Associate Professor Alexandre Da Costa, Rachel Claudio and Meg Travers



Photo by Sara Hammagan

HUNTING BIRDS FLY HIGH

The Hunting Birds, a young Perth folk/pop/rock band made up of five WAAPA graduates, has won a spot on the lineup at the first-ever Falls Festival in Fremantle on January 7 and 8 next year, after scoring the most votes in the Falls Downtown Foster A Band competition.

The band, fostered by Music Insight, is fronted by the dynamic singer/songwriter duo of Connor Minervini (vocals/guitar) and Kendra Fewster (vocals/keyboard), with bassist Brandon Richards, lead guitarist Chris Mackenzie and drummer Caleb Quartermaine.

The five bandmates are all graduates of WAAPA's Contemporary Music Artist program.

The competition saw music fans cast thousands of votes via the festival's website throughout October to select who should play at Falls Downtown Fremantle, alongside the likes of Childish Gambino, London Grammar, The Avalanches, Alison Wonderland, Ta-Ku and more.

The Falls win confirms that The Hunting Birds are on a roll: they launched their new single, State of Mind, earlier this year, made their television debut on Channel 7's Telethon in October and supported British India at their Perth show in November.

The Falls Festival has been a staple on the east coast for the last 23 years at Byron Bay in NSW, Lorne in Victoria and Marion Bay in Tasmania, but next year is the first time it will be held in WA.

From left: Caleb Quartermaine – Drums, Chris Mackenzie – Guitar, Connor Minervini – Vocals/Guitar, Brandon Richards – Bass, Kendra Fewster – Vocals/Keys.

CREATIVE COUNSEL

HIGH-CALIBRE VISITING ARTISTS BRING THEIR EXPERTISE TO WAAPA TO COMPLETE THE PERFORMANCE YEAR

Thanks to the generosity of the Minderoo Foundation, multi-award winning singer, songwriter, author, poet and film-maker Richard Frankland visited WAAPA in August for a week of creative development with the students in the Aboriginal Performance program.

The outcome of that collaborative week was a new work called *Poetry, Prose and Songs from the South*, which was performed in November by the students as their graduating production.

Described as 'a musical tragedy, played out in epic style', the play draws on Richard's work as a field officer for the Royal Commission into Black Deaths in Custody, Victorian Aboriginal legal Service, and as a councillor for young Aboriginal people in high risk conditions.

Richard has written, directed and produced over 50 video, documentary and film projects including the award-winning *No Way to Forget*, *After Mabo* and *Harry's War*.

The Aboriginal Theatre students performed Richard's hard-hitting play, *Conversations With the Dead* in 2014.



Photo by Stephen Heath

Thanks to the generous support of the Jackman Furness Foundation for the Performing Arts, Nils Christie, Annegien Sneep and Lewis Major were guest choreographers at WAAPA for *Verge*, the final dance season of the year.

After a highly successful guest residency last year, acclaimed Dutch choreographer Nils Christie and his assistant Annegien Sneep returned to WAAPA to work with this year's graduating dancers on Christie's *Purcell Pieces*.

Born in 1949, Christie began his career as lead dancer with Nederlands Dans Theater, choreographing his first ballet for the company when he was 25 years old. Since then, Christie has created more than

80 ballets and has worked with leading dance companies throughout the world.

Christie's wife, Annegien Sneep has been his assistant and rehearsal director since 1981 and supervises the re-staging of Christie's works around the world. She also designed the costumes for Christie's later ballets.



European-based Australian choreographer Lewis Major explores the relationship between theatre, movement, light, sound and technology. As a performer and dance maker, he has worked with Akram Khan, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, Russell Maliphant, Shaun Parker, Aakash Odedra, Hans van Den Broeck and others.

Major presented his new work, *Sum*, as part of the *Verge* season.

"It's been a privilege to work with some of the most talented, intelligent and dedicated young dancers in the world here at WAAPA," says Major. "Their breadth of training and exposure to internationally recognized repertoire, creators and teachers have given them an edge that many training institutions are unable to provide. The dancers have brought an intense physical, mental and philosophical sensitivity to the choreographic process, and it's been a pleasure to watch their technical precision, dramatic passion and individual artistry on show in my work."



Photo by Jon Green

In November, WAAPA presented the world premiere of *Opera! The Opera*, by ABC broadcaster and conductor Guy Noble.

Noble was a guest artist at WAAPA thanks to the generous support of the Jackman Furness Foundation.

Opera! The Opera, which was performed by the Postgraduate Classical Vocal students in the Roundhouse Theatre, was directed by WAAPA graduate Brendan Hanson with music direction by Noble and WAAPA lecturer, David Wickam.

Noble describes how the idea behind *Opera! The Opera* – to put the best characters and music of great opera into a new jukebox show – travelled with him for a number of years. It celebrates the music of Mozart, Puccini, Verdi, Dvořák, Rossini and Wagner.



Photo by Jon Green

"We had a workshop in May for a few days on Act 1 where I got to know the students and then Act 2 was completed in numerous hotels and airports as I conducted orchestras around the country," says Noble.

"*Opera! The Opera* was very much written around the students and their individual personalities and it has been wonderful to see them grow into their characters and inhabit them with such exuberance."

As a conductor, Noble has worked with orchestras throughout Australia, New Zealand and Asia, and has also been musical director on many major musicals. Noble was the host of the Breakfast show on ABC Classic FM from 1999-2001, and is still a regular guest presenter on the network. He writes a regular column for *Limelight Magazine*.

Clockwise from far left: director Richard Frankland with the cast of *Poetry, Prose and Songs from the South*; choreographer Nils Christie and Annegien Sneep with the dancers from *Purcell Pieces*; Guy Noble's *Opera! The Opera*; and choreographer Lewis Major's *Sum*.

A GOOD NEIGHBOUR

A WAAPA STUDENT TAKES OUT A COVETED INTERNSHIP ON A MUCH-LOVED AUSSIE SHOW

Acting student Anneliese Apps has won the inaugural 2016 Neighbours Internship, after being selected by the casting department of *Neighbours* from more than 150 applicants.

"The calibre of applicants far exceeded our expectations and although it was a very difficult decision, we are thrilled to have Anneliese Apps, a WAAPA student, as the recipient of this fantastic initiative," says *Neighbours* producer Natalie Lynch.

The internship, an initiative of FremantleMedia Australia and The Equity Foundation with the support of Media Super, gives Anneliese the opportunity to spend a week on the set of the long-running Australian drama, working with key cast members as well as the wardrobe, scheduling, casting, script, art make-up and editing departments. The internship includes return flights and accommodation for the week.

"I am so grateful and excited to have received this wonderful learning opportunity," says Anneliese. "I can't wait to jump into this adventure and see what goes on behind the scenes of *Neighbours*!"



Photo by Kathy Wheatley

PIANO MAGIC

From left: Vice Chancellor of ECU, Professor Steve Chapman, Stewart Symonds, Professor Geoffrey Lancaster and Hon. Minister John Day.

WAAPA'S OUTSTANDING COLLECTION OF HISTORICAL PIANOS GET A NEW LEASE OF LIFE

In May this year, a multi-million dollar collection of 140 historically-significant pianos was generously gifted to WAAPA by NSW collector Stewart Symonds.

Among these historic pianos was Australia's first piano, which arrived on board the *Sirius* as part of the First Fleet in 1788.

"The acquisition of the First Fleet piano, let alone the acquisition of one of the world's most significant historical keyboard collections, is a major boon for the cultural and academic life of WAAPA and ECU," says Professor Geoffrey Lancaster AM, who facilitated the procurement of the collection. "But most importantly it's a wonderful thing for WA to have."

Professor Lancaster says that, in the few short months since arriving in Perth, what is now known as the Stewart Symonds Collection has taken on a life of its own.

Planning is underway for an historical piano festival at WAAPA in 2017, with recitals held throughout the year and a conference on issues relating to historical pianos, such as how these instruments were played in the 18th and 19th centuries, the role of the piano in society, restoration, conservation and tuning.

"The festival will be all things fortepiano, it's going to be very stimulating," says Professor Lancaster.

In the meantime, the invaluable instruments in the Stewart Symonds Collection are in need of restoration

"We have invited one of the world's greatest restorers of early pianos, Lucy Coad, who lives near Bath in England,

to Perth early next year," says Professor Lancaster. "She'll help us make decisions in terms of prioritizing restoration and she will restore the First Fleet piano."

The Stewart Symonds Collection contains 16 instruments, including the First Fleet piano, of exceptional rarity and uniqueness that hold enormous heritage value, both nationally and internationally.

They include a 1736 spinet made by Furley Hawkins and a 1766-67 square piano by the inventor of the square piano in England, Johann Christoph Zumpe.

The spinet – a domestic form of harpsichord – is the only one left in the world by this particular maker and the square piano is one of the earliest Zumpe pianos still in existence.

Professor Lancaster says that restoration work on the Zumpe piano will also need to address the external changes made to the piano in the 1820s, when the case and legs were altered to make it more fashionable. "So what we need to do is get this instrument back to its original 1766 state, not only in its ability to be played but also in its look."



25 YEARS OF SUPPORT

THIS YEAR MARKS THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE D'ARCY SLATER FOUNDATION'S SUPPORT OF WAAPA STUDENTS



From left: D'Arcy Slater scholarship recipient James Thomasson; Associate Dean - Performance, Associate Professor Andrew Lewis; Dean of WAAPA, Professor Julie Warn; Christina Slater; and Vice Chancellor of ECU, Professor Steve Chapman

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the tragic passing of D'Arcy Slater, who at just 13 years old, drowned in the flooded Helena River while returning to school following football training.

An only child, D'Arcy was a strong academic and sporting student, representing Guildford Grammar School in maths and chess competitions, football, tennis and swimming.

His parents, Bill and Christina Slater, set up the D'Arcy Slater Foundation in memory of their son to offer a wide range of scholarships to encourage youth to pursue their aspirations in education, sport and the arts.

Since 2009, the Foundation has generously supported WAAPA through its annual student scholarships and funding for visiting artists.

The student scholarships include the D'Arcy Slater Performing Arts Scholarship, worth \$5,000, which provides financial assistance to deserving students who have been accepted into WAAPA's Acting program, and two Production and Design Travelling Scholarships, valued at \$2,000 each.

James Thomasson, the recipient of this year's D'Arcy Slater Performing Arts Scholarship, says he is grateful for the tremendous impact the scholarship has already had on his university life.

Since its inception, many aspiring actors have benefitted from this scholarship and

have gone on to enjoy success in their chosen profession. These include 2010 graduate Paul Dowson, who appeared in the ABC's conspiracy thriller, *The Code* and the Seven Network's 2015 miniseries *Peter Allen: Not the Boy Next Door*; and 2013 graduate Grace Smibert who, now known as Grace Victoria, has appeared in the short film *Talk to Someone*.

The recipients of this year's Production and Design Travelling Scholarships were 3rd Year Costume student Larisha-Jane Taylor and 3rd Year Stage Management student Jacinta Way.

Larisha is waiting for confirmation on a ten-week internship starting in March next year with top-end fashion labels Marchesa and Zac Posen Atelier in New York. Jacinta has secured a six-week stage management secondment next year with Dragone Entertainment Group's *The House of Dancing Water* in Macau, China.

"I strongly believe that undertaking an internship with such celebrated design labels will open many doors for me in my career, as I would eventually like to rise to the role of costume designer in feature film," says Larisha.

"I feel so incredibly privileged to have been awarded this scholarship as it has helped provide me with the opportunity to travel abroad to undertake my dream secondment. It is going to make such a difference to me and I would like to express my gratitude to the D'Arcy Slater

Foundation for making this amazing experience possible."

Jacinta agrees, saying: "The funds from this scholarship will help me to reach my dream and goals of internationally being part of the performing arts, taking every experience I can from the show and Macau and transforming these into smart tools in preparation for my future in theatre."

Students in WAAPA's performing arts courses also benefit from the D'Arcy Slater Foundation's generous funding of the Visiting Artist program, which brings nationally acclaimed directors to the Academy.

Guest directors facilitated by the D'Arcy Slater Foundation include, among others: Jason Langley, who this year won a Green Room Award win for Best Direction in Vic Theatre Company's *Loving Repeating*; Matt Edgerton, now Artistic Director of leading children's theatre company, Barking Gecko; and this year's visiting artist, Glenn Hayden, who directed the 2nd Year Acting students in Howard Barker's play *Victory*. Hayden is a WAAPA graduate with nearly 30 years' experience as an actor and director across many forms of theatre, with a particular focus on working with young people and cultural, economic and geographical diversity.

WAAPA is immensely grateful to Bill and Christina Slater for their ongoing support of WAAPA through the D'Arcy Slater Foundation.

BAPTISM BY FIRE

To say that Indian-born percussionist Tao Issaro grew up in an artistic family is an understatement.

His mother, renowned Indian dancer and choreographer Daksha Sheth, and father, Perth-born musician and composer Devissaro, are co-directors of the Daksha Sheth Dance Company, in which his sister Isha Sharvani is now the lead dancer and Tao performs as a percussionist.

Based in Kerala, India, the Daksha Sheth Dance Company integrates contemporary dance with traditional Indian movement into cutting-edge performances.

Tao has performed in over 500 performances in 30 countries, touring extensively in Asia, Australia, the UK and the US. He has also performed with Asima – an ensemble of young Kerala musicians founded and directed by his father – for the BBC Proms at London's Royal Albert Hall in 2010 and the Kennedy National Center for the Arts in Washington DC in 2011.

As a soloist, Tao was invited to showcase his skills at the Ustad Zakir Hussain's Barsi Festival in Mumbai in 2014. He has also composed and produced music for TV, film and theatre.

Tao's connection to Perth through regular visits to his father's side of the family was strengthened when, four years ago, he was accepted into WAAPA.

He says that the strong focus on performance at WAAPA was 'a baptism by fire'.

"I came to WAAPA to learn the Western percussion style with the full mallets, marimbas and vibraphones," he says. "The moment I got here I was thrown into the world of concerts and exams and it really helped me get my act together. It is fantastic the discipline you're forced into because of the amount of performing you do."

This year, Tao's original compositions have been showcased by WAAPA's award-winning percussion ensemble Defying Gravity at the Fremantle Arts Centre in March and at the 2016 Australian Percussion Gathering held in Brisbane in July.

Having completed the first half of his Honours year, Tao has deferred his studies this semester in order to embrace the many work opportunities coming his way.

These include performing with his sister in Ochre Contemporary Dance Company's regional tour of *Kaya (Hello)* in September-October, for which Tao composed the music and performed.

Tao and Isha then flew to India to join their parents for a performance with the Daksha Sheth Dance Company as part of the entertainment for the 2016 BRICS Summit, held in Goa on 15-16 October.

Tao is now performing a series of international shows with his parents' dance company, starting in Dubai. He is also working on a new production with his sister and is hoping to be part of a tour to India with Ochre Contemporary Dance Company.

Even with multiple work projects on the go, the 25-year-old percussionist is determined to return to WAAPA to finish his studies.

"WAAPA is just a fantastic institution, I've studied in America and I've been to all kinds of music universities and conservatories around the world but the thing that really stands out for me about WAAPA is the coming together of all the facets of performing arts in the one building," Tao says.

"You have dancers, stage designers, prop makers, musicians from all disciplines, opera, it's just such a great boiling pot for all these incredibly talented people from all these different fields. You get to come into this one space and enjoy being lectured by these amazing, amazing teachers and perform in an incredible number of shows, it's just fantastic."

END OF YEAR AWARDS



On October 31, Acting graduate Brittany Santariga was awarded the Chris Edmund Scholarship, worth \$12,500. Fellow graduating actor Rory O'Keeffe won the runner-up prize worth \$2,500.

The scholarship is named in honour of Chris Edmund, former Head of Acting at WAAPA. Chris is currently 'The Pronouncer' on Network Ten's *The Great Australian Spelling Bee*.

The scholarship gives two students who demonstrate artistic excellence the opportunity to make international breaks in their career and attend further training overseas. It is generously donated by LAGRAL, Jane and Glenn Whiddon's private philanthropic company, and the Jackman Furness Foundation for Performing Arts (JFFPA).

"It is a pleasure to be able to help these wonderfully talented young adults reach their full potential at an international level," says Jane Whiddon. "We hope this will enable decision-makers in key entertainment industry hubs around the world know what we've always known – that WAAPA produces world class performers."

This year's Leslie Anderson Awards were presented in November to graduating Acting student Giuseppe Rotondella and graduating Music Theatre student Stefanie Caccamo.

These annual awards were first presented in 1989 in honour of the late Leslie Anderson, doyen of WA's theatre critics who wrote for the Sunday Times and The Australian.



Winners of the Leslie Anderson Awards

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

A GLIMPSE OF WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING ON STAGE AT WAAPA



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Poetry, Prose and Songs from the South



Rent



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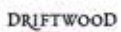
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Rent



Verge



Poetry, Prose and Songs from the South



Match Maker



Opera! The Opera